



STARMER AND THE WAR ON LABOUR LEFT

DEFENDING CORBYN IS OUTLAWED >>PAGE 6



GRENFELL BETRAYED BUT STILL FIGHTING

CAMPAIGNERS SPEAK OUT
>>PAGES 10&11

Socialist Worker

£1 | No 2731 | 18 - 24 November 2020 | socialistworker.co.uk

VACCINE HOPES OF BILLIONS...

AT THE MERCY OF THE MARKET



FOR THE multinational firms that make them, vaccines are not produced to save lives. They are generated for profit.

In any rational society, the full details of trials and successful developments would be shared openly.

Any facility should be allowed to manufacture effective

vaccines without the obstacles of patents and charges.

People's needs would come first, not depend on who has been able to buy up stocks first, or which state is most powerful.

But under capitalism lives are now reliant on the market and businesses' greed.

Pfizer and Moderna, which



TORIES FAILED on virus

declared successful vaccine trials, will demand high prices. That will condemn billions in the Global South to more infections.

The Tories have failed at every stage of the pandemic. But as well as them, the profit system needs to go.

>>Pages 4&5

BENEFITS

Universal Credit claimants are living in poverty

THE TORY benefits system is causing "immense misery" for millions of people in Britain, a TUC report has found.

The report looked at the impact of forcing new Universal Credit claimants to wait five weeks for their first payment.

It contained harrowing stories.

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POLAND



Abortion rights demos undercut Nazi-led march

THE NAZI-led Independence Day March in Poland last week was a flop. For years the 11 November march has attracted tens of thousands of people. This year it was much smaller.

A mass movement in defence of abortion rights has put the Nazis on the back foot.

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UNIVERSITIES

Students build resistance to bullying bosses

STUDENTS ARE using rent strikes, occupations and protests to take on appalling treatment by their universities.

Students in Bristol and Manchester are taking part in rent strikes. And protests were planned for this Friday.

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THE THINGS THEY SAY

'We may look back on the ugly Trump era—dare I say, even nostalgically—as one of military disengagement and relative peace'

Sir Vince Cable, former leader of the Liberal Democrats, on what Joe Biden will be like

'Above all, people who remind those in power that they are there to DO the job'

Sarah Vine explaining why it was wrong to sack her friend Dominic Cummings

'If the future is now all about wind farms, trans rights and wokery, Boris Johnson is doomed'

Dan Hodges in the Mail newspaper looking to the post-Cummings government

'The prime minister is focused on taking the required steps to equip the country to beat the Coronavirus'

Whoever is left at Number 10 as government spokesperson says everything is fine



Rich rats deserting sinking yachts for sealed bunkers

NOT CONTENT with hiding away on private islands, the super-rich are now buying exclusive services to rescue them from pandemics, protests and climate catastrophes.

Dan Richards is chief executive of Global Rescue, an evacuation response company. He said he had signed up more clients in the past five months than in the company's entire 16-year history.

Richards said he had been asked to draw up plans to transfer hundreds of employees from cities should fires or civil unrest break out.

"They've got real risks and real hazards that 10 years ago weren't even on their radar," he said. "We've been engaged more frequently to do things that I honestly have never contemplated."

Elite medical practices are creating personal preventive strategies for wealthy clients.

They range from surveying patients' homes to ensure they are sealed from smoke to monitoring their vital signs with wearables and delivering at-home intravenous fluids and vitamins to bolster their bodies' defences.

Some refer clients to dermatologists for the effect of heat on their skin, and therapists for the anxiety produced by the disasters.

Scott Braunstein, medical director at Sollis Health, said patients were realising they needed to become "self-sufficient" because of the number of natural disasters.

Preparing for such disasters used to be for "people on the fringes", he explained, but it was now mainstream. Some are approaching firms offering

climate-controlled bunkers, such as the Vivos Group.

Dante Vicino, the firm's executive director, said its complex of almost 600 ex-military bunkers in the Black Hills of South Dakota had been fitted with air filters "on steroids".

These were put to the test when fires burnt in nearby Wyoming. "Outside, man, you could smell the smoke," he said. "But people inside their bunkers said they couldn't tell."

Elena Villalobos, at the WHO climate change and health programme, said there is a growing divide not just between developed and developing countries, but between rich and poor in the same country.

THE MINISTRY of Defence wrote off almost £450 million last year in ditched projects. The sum would pay a year's salaries for 13,409 nurses. Some £231 million went on scrapping armed vehicles. The write-off of RAF Sentry surveillance aircraft cost £147 million. Another £22 million loss came selling a boat to Lithuania. Five drones crashed—costing £6 million. And a IT system that didn't work swallowed up £4.5 million.



THE EQUALITY and Human Rights Commission has some new commissioners. Of note is David Goodhart. Writing in June, he described complaints of institutional racism as "statistically naive".

In 2004 he wrote "To put it bluntly, most of us prefer our own kind." He declared in 2010, "Labour must become the anti-immigration party." He is well suited to his new position.

Disabled people are 'routinely' restrained

THE USE of restraints on patients with autism and learning disabilities in hospitals in England has risen to shockingly high levels.

Data from NHS Digital indicates both children and adult inpatients are routinely subjected to physical restraint, seclusion, segregation and chemical "coshing".

BBC File on 4 reviewed the data and concluded that in 2019 there were 3,225 reported cases of patients confined to their rooms by themselves.

Some 850 of these cases related to children. In the first seven months of 2020, there were 2,000 incidents of secluding patients.



A report published last month showed that some patients were held in seclusion for 13 years, while others were routinely restrained either physically or chemically.

The number of patients restrained has increased from 22,000 incidents in 2017 to 38,000 incidents in 2020. That is an average of 100 a day, or one restraint every 15 minutes.

Furloughed companies paying shareholders

A NUMBER of British companies have decided to start paying dividends to shareholders again, or in some cases have committed to their annual payout, while taking furlough money.

These include Telecom Plus and construction group CRH, which are paying dividends for the period covered by the furlough scheme, and haulier Wincanton, which will resume dividends in January.

Science Group, a research consultancy, and construction group Hill & Smith also used the furlough scheme and have committed to paying

dividends. Retailers such as J Sainsbury have been criticised for paying large dividends after receiving business rates relief during the pandemic.

B&M, the discount retailer, last week said it would repay furlough money but not the relief on rates, despite paying shareholders a £250 million special dividend.

Cops after what's on your mobile phone

POLICE AND government investigators have signed contracts worth more than £4 million in the past two years with an Israeli company that specialises in hacking into iPhones.

London's Metropolitan Police, the Scottish Police Authority and the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) signed the deals with Cellebrite to collect data from mobile phones.

Cellebrite boasts that its software can collect data from mobile phones without having to unlock them.

It also says that it can access stored passwords and recover messages from encrypted apps such as WhatsApp and Telegram.

In September the Metropolitan Police received approval for a £2 million, three-year licence of Cellebrite Premium.

The contract describes the licence as a renewal, noting that "the tool is currently in use".

It also said the Metropolitan Police used another mobile data extraction tool that was only compatible with iOS devices.

When asked by the Financial Times newspaper, the Metropolitan Police declined to comment.

The Scottish Police Authority has contracts worth around £1.7 million with Cellebrite, and the CMA has one for close to £90,000.

Cellebrite's product page states it can "bypass pattern, password or PIN locks" across devices including mobile phones, drones, SIM cards and GPS devices.

The UK data regulator, the Information Commissioner's Office, said in June that it was concerned about the way in which police forces in Britain "routinely access and extract the contents of mobile phones".

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Students build resistance to bullying universities

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

STUDENTS ARE using rent strikes, occupations and protests to take on appalling treatment by their universities.

Since October students in Bristol and Manchester have taken part in rent strikes.

Over 300 students at the University of Manchester (UoM) are currently withholding their rent.

More rent strike protests were planned for Friday this week.

A petition for no-penalty releases from accommodation contracts, rent reductions and deposit refunds for international students was set to be heard by Bristol university's Board of Trustees.

And students living at the Fallowfields university accommodation in Manchester are fighting the university's contemptuous treatment of students and staff.

Students in halls of residence are being met with increasing levels of intimidation by the police and security after protests erupted earlier this month.

Witnessed

In a video shared on social media a black student was pinned against a wall by a security guard. According to the victim's friend, who witnessed the ordeal, the guard thought the student was a drug dealer.

Throughout the video the security guard asserted that the student didn't look like he "belonged here."

The student can be heard saying in the video, "I'm a University of Manchester student. They're trying to snatch my card out of me. You see, I take this as racial profiling."

The occupation of the Owen Park tower on the Fallowfields accommodation by nine activists has led to an increased level of security and police presence.



STUDENTS HAVE occupied the Owens Park tower at the University of Manchester (above and left) to demand an end to terrible treatment of workers and students by management



Chris who is currently inside the occupation said, "after the fences were taken down by students, the university management thought that there would be violent protests by students."

"Occupying students and students living in student accommodation are doing nothing wrong. On the first night of the occupation we saw riot vans, security and community support officers."

Over 190 staff at the University signed a letter to the university's president to express their "disgust"

over how students are being treated.

And an online rally organised by the occupiers and UoM rent strikers last Friday drew over 450 people.

"UoM failed its students. It has let us down at every stage" said occupier Lucy. It promised we could have access to face to face teaching, freshers' events and parties. It couldn't keep any of those promises.

"The university was so desperate to get students back, it has chartered flights from China to grab the £20,000 plus in tuition fees that international students pay."

Occupier Izzy told the rally, "Our vice chancellor Nancy Rothwell is paid £260,000 a year while some staff are on a minimum wage and students are being fenced in."

"In the summer students went out to protest at the A-Levels scandal, now this is happening."

"We are showing that we will resist, and we won't be manipulated."

What's your story?
Email with your ideas
reports@socialistworker.co.uk

SPEAKING OUT

'We will not back down'

IN BRISTOL a rent strike by 1,400 students has forced the university to make some concessions including the promise that activists won't be disciplined.

But university bosses are still refusing a 30 percent cut in rent and for students to be able to leave their accommodation contracts.

Bristol student Bella told an online rally on Friday that other universities must replicate the actions of students in Manchester.

She said, "Universities are treating students horrifically across the country."

"We need occupations in all the universities—all students should take this up. We need to show vice



Students rallied in Liverpool

chancellors we aren't backing down."

Members of the Socialist Worker Student Society (SWSS) took part in three banner drops on Monday to demand that management stop putting profit before students.

And students at the University of Glasgow put up fences around the office of their vice chancellor, Anton Muscatelli, last week.

They said this was in solidarity with the protesters in Manchester.

Protesters added that the "management team made no provisions for the return of students in September and their pursuit of profit is a threat to public health."

In Liverpool, students held a socially-distanced protest on Monday. SWSS member in Liverpool Jeandre told Socialist Worker, "Speakers talked about the mental distress students are going through and voiced how angry we are that our staff are being made redundant."

Students were planning to take part in more action at more universities on Thursday.

Socialist Worker Appeal to raise £125,000

Socialist Worker gives a voice to the people fighting for a better world. Throughout the pandemic it has dispelled the racist scapegoating and anti-working class rhetoric of the mainstream press.

We publish stories of the strikes and protests that can beat back the bosses and bigots. We are asking everyone who enjoys Socialist Worker to donate as much as they can and help fund the resistance.

I SUPPORT THE APPEAL BECAUSE...

'Our class and the left need a voice to drown out the fake news of the right wing media. Socialist Worker does that by raising issues that are important to us and ensuring our experiences and voices are heard. Solidarity.'

Sarah Woolley —
BFAWU bakers' union General Secretary

To donate go to socialistworker.co.uk/appeal

Call 020 7840 5607 or send a cheque, payable to 'SW Appeal' to PO Box 74955, London E16 9EJ



Tories cannot be trusted with Covid-19 vaccines

by YURI PRASAD

THE GOVERNMENT'S repeated Covid-19 failures undermine efforts to contain it—and mean we should not trust the Tories with the hopes for a new vaccine.

The number of people in hospital with the virus is rising to levels last seen in the early weeks of the pandemic in spring.

At the beginning of this week some 14,915 people were hospitalised with Covid-19. At the height of the first wave in April the number was just above 18,000.

And there has been a relentless increase in the weekly death toll.

Latest figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show that figure rising to its highest level since the beginning of June.

The Tories' failure to close schools during England's second national lockdown has also come with a high price.

According to new research by the ONS and Imperial College London, children are now more likely than adults to be the person bringing infection into a household.

With the virus rising, it is no wonder that millions of people greeted news of new potential vaccines with a huge sigh of relief.

The government says that a vaccine developed by Pfizer and BioNTech could be ready for a Britain-wide vaccination programme by the end of the year.

While the trial results look very promising, the task of distributing it will be immense.

First, the Pfizer vaccine needs to be stored at -70 degrees centigrade, far colder than a household

BACK STORY

Covid-19 continues to spread making the need for vaccine ever-more vital

● Hospitalisation and death rates are rising fast

● The number of very sick people almost equals the height of the first wave

● A new vaccine looks hopeful, but needs huge infrastructure to support it

● We cannot have confidence in the Tories to get this right

fridge. The refrigeration infrastructure needed does not currently exist at the scale required.

Huge, super-cooled regional depots, with hundreds of specialist vehicles are needed.

And medicines packed in dry ice will need to be transported to the GP surgeries that the government wants to use as injection sites.

Distribute

Ministers should be instructing firms that can help produce equipment needed to store and distribute the jabs to do so immediately.

Instead, medical freezer suppliers are eying up huge potential profits.

Industry leader Thermo Fisher Scientific recently told investors it was seeing “very, very significant demand”.

On Monday another hopeful vaccine announcement came from US biotech company Moderna. It claims its vaccine is 94 percent effective and supplies can be kept in a normal freezer.

But supplies are limited and

won't be available in Britain until spring 2021 “at the earliest”.

Moderna will also charge around £40 per two-course dose.

The second problem is producing a list of people most in need of the vaccine—and ensuring they receive it.

This will involve millions of names and medical records being categorised in priority lists and allocated to local centres.

GP surgeries are already overwhelmed after years of cuts and cannot be expected to manage such a huge local operation without support.

But if this task is allocated to a private sector outsourcer, such as Serco, it will be a disaster.

The Tories have so far failed every key test of the pandemic.

After outsourced testing, failed apps, and near collapse of the tracing system, they cannot be counted on to carry out this vital task.

MAJOR CORONAVIRUS vaccine trials have begun in Britain

‘Exhausted’ NHS workers demand pay rises and more staff

by TOMÁŠ TENGYEL-EVANS

THE TORIES could be about to deliver a slap in the face to NHS workers battling the second wave of coronavirus.

Tory chancellor Rishi Sunak will conduct a one-year spending review on Wednesday 25 November.

This could include a decision on whether or not to recommend a pay rise for NHS workers.

NHS workers, who organised grassroots protests over pay in the summer, held a bike ride protest across hospitals in London last Saturday.

Protesters chanted, “What do we want? Pay rise. When do we want it? Now”, outside the main

entrance of University College Hospital in central London.

Health worker Lorna said, “There are 30,000 nursing vacancies in the NHS and 100,000 other vacancies in the NHS.”

“NHS workers went into the pandemic exhausted because we're so understaffed—and now it's even worse.

“Our pay has fallen by 20 percent in the last ten years and, scandalously, the lowest paid workers in the NHS don't even get the living wage.

“We're here to say we need a pay rise so we can recruit and retain staff and carry on being there for you.”

The Unison union held a socially-distanced protest

outside the Scottish parliament building at the beginning of the month.

Tracey, a Unison member, said, “We're here to demand a pay rise this year” from Scottish health minister Jeane Freeman.

“She promised us a couple of months ago that she would use the re-opener clause and recognise the NHS staff before we even start to look at next year,” she said.

“We're now in wave two of this pandemic and our workers are exhausted.”

Unison in Scotland is holding a consultative ballot for industrial action over pay.

Meanwhile, NHS bosses are demanding Sunak make good

his promise to give the health service “whatever it needs”.

NHS Providers, which represents the heads of hospital trusts, is calling for a £4 billion boost to their budget.

They warned that “if the spending review fails to allocate the extra money” to fund more capacity “the health and wellbeing of hundreds of thousands of patients is at risk”.

IN BRIEF

Domestic abuse cases rising during lockdown

LOCKDOWN measures mean women are put at a higher risk of domestic violence in their own homes.

The charity Refuge, which runs the National Domestic Abuse hotline, said 40,000 calls were made during the first three months of lockdown in the spring.

Calls have already started to rise sharply as England has entered a second lockdown, with other Covid-19 restrictions in place in Wales and Scotland.

Lisa King, director of communications and external affairs at Refuge, said, “The experience faced by women during the first set of lockdown restrictions should serve as a wake-up call as we continue through the next stage of lockdown and Covid-19 response.”

The Counting Dead

Women project told MPs last week that between 23 March and 12 April at least 16 domestic abuse killings had taken place. That's more than double the average rate for that time of year.

Women are not only victims of violence, they are also let down

Women are now more at risk of violence

by lack of support from the government.

One refuge service manager “supported four women who attempted to take their own lives during lockdown”. All four women had experienced delays in Universal Credit payments—one had waited nine weeks for her first payment.

As women are let down by a lack of safe housing options or refuge services, they are forced to remain in dangerous environments.

One victim of domestic violence is too many. The current rates of abuse are a damning indictment of how the government views the lives of working class women.

Sarah Bates

Vital NHS workers forced to leave Britain as visas denied

VISA RULES are forcing migrant NHS workers to leave Britain just as the health service faces growing pressures in the pandemic, unions have warned.

The Home Office promised at the beginning of the pandemic to extend visas for one year—free of charge—for NHS and care workers.

But it only applied to around 3,000 workers who had a few months left in

Britain. Others were removed.

This included senior nursing assistant Arun, who was forced to return to India after working in London hospitals during the pandemic.

“On top of the mental and physical strain of working through the pandemic, I was so anxious I would have to leave the country”, he said.

Minnie Rahman of the Joint Council

for the Welfare of Immigrants said, “People who've been risking their lives to keep us safe shouldn't have to jump through endless hoops.

“And they shouldn't pay astronomical fees just to keep living and working here.

“The government must now take fair and practical action, and grant free visa extensions and the right to stay to all key workers.”

Midwives are understaffed

MORE THAN three quarters of midwives think staffing levels at their NHS trust are unsafe, according to a survey by the RCM union.

The RCM said services were at breaking point, with 42 percent of midwives saying shifts were understaffed.

A third reported

there were “very significant gaps” in most shifts.

“Maternity staff are exhausted, they're demoralised and some of them are looking for the door,” said RCM chief executive Gill Walton.

“For the safety of every pregnant woman and every baby, this cannot

be allowed to continue.”

Walton added that Britain faces an exodus of skilled health workers.

According to the survey of 1,400 workers, seven out of ten had considered leaving the profession while more than a third were seriously thinking about it.

Socialist Worker
WHAT WE THINK

TORIES VIRUS FAILURES COST LIVES FOR PROFIT

IT'S BEEN a year since what is believed to have been the first coronavirus infection in Wuhan, China, on 17 November 2019. Now there are finally real hopes for a vaccine.

But all evidence shows that the Tories can't be trusted to contain the virus. Instead, their disastrous policies sent Covid-19 deaths soaring—because they put profit ahead of people's lives.

They began by denying the scale of the threat.

By 24 January, with the first coronavirus case confirmed outside China, health secretary Matt Hancock said the threat to Britain was “low”. By 31 January the first cases were confirmed in Britain.

On 10 February the Tories admitted that coronavirus posed a “serious and imminent threat to public health”.

But they delayed bringing in restrictions that could cut transmission. Schools and workplaces stayed open. And huge public events went ahead.

The first people died from Covid-19 in Britain on 5 March.

Five days later the Cheltenham Festival took place—bringing together 150,000 people. The next

day, the WHO declared the virus a pandemic.

Yet it took the Tories until 20 March to close schools and until 23 March to declare a lockdown.

The government has refused to properly fund the health service. It repeatedly failed to provide Personal Protective Equipment to NHS and care home staff.

In April it admitted that none of the 17.5 million tests it had bought worked. And it continued to downplay the pandemic.

So Johnson said Britain was “past the peak” of the disease on 30 April. But by May Britain had the highest death toll in Europe.

On 1 June, the Tories allowed some primary school children to return to schools. They claimed their end to some lockdown

Tories ignored the warnings because following the science would hurt profits

POLICE FAILED VICTIMS

that he was exclusively targeting sex workers were disregarded.

This meant they ignored evidence which may have led to his capture sooner. There was also a deeply sexist attitude about the victims that clouded the entire hunt for Sutcliffe, and continued through to his trial.

The police say their attitudes have changed—yet the statistics don't back this up.

The number of prosecutions for rape fell to a record low last year, despite more women reporting

measures on 4 July was to protect jobs. In reality they wanted pubs, restaurants, shops and other outlets open so that bosses could make money.

Throughout August the Tories bribed us to visit busy restaurants and pubs with their “Eat out to help out” scheme. The test and trace system, run by private firm Serco, has been a disaster.

Since then, they have pushed workers and students back to schools, colleges and universities.

The resulting rise in infections was predicted. But the Tories ignored the warnings because following the science would hurt profits.

If schools closed, many parents would find it hard to work. If universities didn't reopen, hundreds of millions of pounds would be lost in unpaid rents.

The vaccines are being produced by private pharmaceutical firms—leaving us at the mercy of the market. In the hands of the Tories and private firms, they won't be equally available for everyone.

The virus has exposed capitalism as a sick system that puts the wealth of a few above the health of the vast majority.



ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS



A fine scapegoat for many Tory failures

DOMINIC CUMMINGS' stagey departure from 10 Downing St, like a pantomime Demon King, was one of the few happy moments in a terrible year. But what does it really mean?

Forget all the palace gossip about personal intrigues inside Number 10. Robert Peston wrote in the Spectator magazine that “the talk among Tory MPs of replacing Johnson next year became deafening” before Cummings was sacked.

But when you consider what has brought down so much criticism on the Tory government—its mishandling of the pandemic—the failure has been a collective one.

The delay in locking down in the spring and the murderous abandonment of the old and the sick in care homes resulted from decisions taken in Whitehall.

The more recent—and perhaps equally murderous—bunglings have plenty of fingerprints on them.

It was the hugely overpraised chancellor of the exchequer Rishi Sunak who resisted the “circuit breaker” lockdown and tried to scrap the furlough scheme. And there is a consistent pattern to the mismanagement of the pandemic—the Tories’ continuing commitment to neoliberalism.

Hence the obsession with cutting spending and taxes, marketising the NHS, and relying on dodgy private firms, for example, to run test and trace.

All this has been par for the course with the Tories ever since Margaret Thatcher’s heyday in the 1980s. Cummings’ main contribution to the mess was his notorious trips to Durham and Barnard Castle.

His survival after being caught flagrantly flouting the lockdown rules was an obnoxious flaunting of his personal power. But there’s nothing to suggest the Tories’ performance would have been significantly better if he hadn’t been there.

Operator

Cummings seems like a thoroughly unpleasant individual, but he’s an astute political operator. He helped to win both the 2016 Brexit referendum for Leave and the 2019 general election for the Tories through the same method. He polarised the electorate on a fake anti-establishment basis impregnated with Little England nationalism.

This is a version of Donald Trump’s political style. Nigel Farage likes to posture as the British Trump, but from his backroom Cummings has been a much more effective practitioner of Trumpism. Look at how before last year’s election he steered Johnson to campaign against parliament and the judges and purge the Tory party of its pro-EU wing.

Cummings’ problem was that, while this brutality helped to deliver an 80-seat majority, it has been irrelevant to the gigantic crises unleashed by Covid-19. In all probability his arrogance and bullying antagonised too many people against the background of a government that was failing anyway.

So Cummings became a convenient scapegoat. Where does this leave the government? After they were booted out of Downing Street last Friday, Cummings and his ally Lee Cain complained to the Telegraph about Johnson’s “dithering”.

Charles Moore wrote in the same paper, “Why did Dominic Cummings become the key figure in Boris Johnson’s administration? Because he was the one who could make decisions. And why has he had to leave that administration? For the same reason.”

This will soon be tested. Johnson—now self-isolating—faces perhaps the biggest decision of his premiership in the next week or so. If Britain is going to exit the EU single market at the end of 2020 with a trade agreement with the European Union, this will have to happen very soon.

Johnson is caught between the EU, determined to use its advantage to keep Britain an economic satellite, and the US. It will soon have a new president, Joe Biden, hostile to Brexit. Sunak and business, terrified of the economic disruption if there is no deal, are lobbying hard for Johnson to cave.

There are contradictory interpretations of what Cummings’ removal will mean for these negotiations. Some say it frees Johnson up to cut a deal. Others say that he will prefer no deal to antagonising the Leave forces in the Tory party.

Whoever is right, the situation is going to get even tougher for the Tories, Cummings or no Cummings.

JEREMY CORBYN drew big crowds in Bristol last year. Party bosses there suspended members for defending him

Starmmer ramps up his war on beleaguered Labour left

by NICK CLARK

THE LABOUR Party upped its crackdown on its own activists last week, suspending leading members in Bristol for supporting former leader Jeremy Corbyn.

Party bosses suspended Bristol West Constituency Labour Party (CLP) chair Hannah Little and secretary Paul Tasman. They acted just hours after members of the CLP passed a motion demanding Corbyn’s reinstatement.

Party members are banned from supporting Corbyn—or even discussing his suspension—by order of Labour general secretary David Evans.

Little and Tasman were suspended for defying this order and organising a meeting to vote on the motion last Friday. The motion said Corbyn’s suspension was a “politically motivated attack against the left of the Labour Party by the leadership.”

Labour leader Keir Starmer and his allies in the party machine launched an assault on left wing members under the guise of cracking down on antisemitism.

An Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) report published last month said the party had committed unlawful acts in its handling of antisemitism allegations.

It was the culmination of years of attempts to discredit Corbyn’s leadership by

claiming the left’s opposition to Israel was based on hatred of Jews.

Corbyn responded by saying he did not accept all of the report’s findings. He also said—factually—that the scale of antisemitism inside the party had been “overstated for political reasons”.

He was suspended that day.

The right use the EHRC report as proof that Corbyn’s leadership—and his support for Palestinians against Israel—was antisemitic. The Labour left’s response has focussed on claiming the

report shows antisemitism existed as a problem before Corbyn’s leadership.

They also say it allows people to “question the scale of antisemitism in the party”. Yet this is only allowed “based on their own experience”—meaning people cannot challenge the overall accusation politically.

Accepting the report also means accepting its claim that “illegitimate” criticism of Israel is antisemitic.

Some leading figures—such as MP John McDonnell—want the left to go further and apologise to the right.

Momentum founder Jon Lansman, said he “wasn’t happy” with Corbyn for disagreeing with the report, even though he was “technically right.”

The group has encouraged members to oppose Corbyn’s suspension by passing motions and lobbying MPs.

But the Labour’s leadership wants to make this impossible. And results of elections to Labour’s national executive last week strengthened the right’s grip on the party.

Right wing candidates increased their number on the body, with Luke Akehurst—director of We Believe in Israel—getting most votes.

The only way to fight back is to challenge the accusations, and defend the right to criticise Israel and support Palestine. That’s not possible inside the Labour Party.

Starmer wants left muzzled

Islamophobia crisis

MORE THAN half of Muslim members of the Labour Party do not trust Keir Starmer to tackle Islamophobia.

That’s according to a report published by Labour Muslim Network last week.

A survey of Muslim members found 55 percent of respondents did not “trust the leadership of the Labour party to tackle Islamophobia effectively”.

The report also said that more than a quarter of Muslim members had experienced Islamophobia within

the ranks of the party. It said Muslim members had been subject to stereotypes of “grooming gangs”, called “terrorists” and “foreigners”, and expected to condemn violence they had no part in.

People who responded to the survey linked this to Labour’s past support for the “war on terror”—and its continued support for the Prevent programme. This encourages public sector workers, such as teachers, to report students and colleagues for signs of “extremism”.

Tory laws to pave way for attacks on migrants

A ‘points-based’ system to divide workers has been pushed through, reports **Tomáš Tengely-Evans**

HOME SECRETARY Priti Patel is pushing ahead with plans to make Britain’s racist immigration system even worse after parliament passed a new law last week.

The Immigration Act dumps free movement for European migrants when Britain officially leaves the European Union (EU) on 31 December.

It paves the way for a “points-based” immigration system. This will make it harder for people to come to Britain, and life harder for migrants who do.

Patel said the law’s passage was an “historic day” for “controlling our own borders and delivering on the people’s priorities”.

A statement from Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) slammed Patel’s “gloating” over the end of free movement. “The new immigration law will make life harder for tens of thousands of migrant workers and their families,” it said.

“They include many of the same workers in hospitals, social care and food production who were shown to be vital during the pandemic.

“It shows Priti Patel’s talk of ‘delivering on people’s priorities is a sham.

“The Conservative government should be getting the virus, with its disproportionate impact on BAME communities, under control.

Scapegoat

“Rather, it is seeking to scapegoat migrants for stagnant wages, unemployment or falling living standards.”

The Home Office already brought in new regulations last month to set up the new points-based rules. A previous Tory law, the Immigration Act 1971, gives the home secretary sweeping powers to determine what hoops migrants have to jump through to come to Britain.

The new regulations create an arbitrary divide between “skilled workers” and those deemed “unskilled workers”. This will make it harder for migrants to work, study and make a life in Britain. The

BACK STORY

The Immigration Bill will dump freedom of movement for European migrants

● Home secretary Priti Patel wants new rules after Britain fully leaves the European Union

● Those deemed “skilled” would need a job offer, to meet a salary threshold of £25,600 a year and have good English language skills

● Those deemed “low skilled” will not have any route to make a life in Britain

skilled worker visa requires workers to be “sponsored to do a specific job, which meets skill and salary requirements, by an employer that has been licensed by the Home Office”.

The main income threshold has been set at £25,600 a year. Migrants who earn £20,480 or more can get around the threshold if they can make up points in another category.

These include applying for a job in a sector with labour shortages.

People who come on the skilled worker visa can apply to be British subjects after six years.

The story is very different for workers who will only be able to come on a temporary six-month visa. They will not be able to take a permanent job, work a second job, access state support or some public services or bring family members to Britain.

Accepting divisions in the working class—whether between migrants and those born in Britain or “skilled” and “unskilled”—makes it easier for the Tories and bosses to push through their attacks.

Anti-racists should argue to defend free movement for EU migrants—and extend it beyond the EU’s racist border regime.



On other pages...

Why saying ‘coloured’ turns back the clock on progress >>> **Page 15**

Mediterranean

PEOPLE IN an overcrowded boat are picked up by a rescue organisation after leaving Libya

‘A massacre at Europe’s borders’ as over 100 refugees are drowned

MORE THAN 110 refugees died in the space of three days in the Mediterranean Sea last week.

Four refugee boats were shipwrecked off the coast of Libya.

Over 70 people’s bodies washed up on a beach in al-Khums in the west of the north African country.

They were on a boat of more than 120 people, according to the United Nations International Organisation of Migration.

Some 47 survivors were brought to shore by coastguard and fishing workers on Thursday of last week.

Only a few hours after the bodies were found, the Medecins Sans Frontiers/Doctors Without Borders charity helped three victims of another shipwreck.

It said those who survived “saw loved ones disappear beneath the waves, dying in front of their eyes”. Some 20 people drowned in the wreck off the coast of the Libyan town of Sorman.

The day before another six refugees—including a six month old boy—drowned when a dinghy with over 100 people capsized. The baby boy, originally from Guinea in West Africa, died on board the rescue ship after he was saved from the waves. A tweet from the

Open Arms rescue organisation said, “Despite the enormous commitment of our medical team, a six-month-old baby has just died.

“We requested an urgent evacuation for him and other people in serious conditions, but he didn’t make it.

“How much pain and sorrow!”

The boat had begun to deflate only a few hours after leaving the Libyan coast. Riccardo Gatti, the president of Open Arms Italy, said rescuers found themselves “in front of a dramatic scene”.

“The boat had practically imploded and hundreds of people found themselves in the water, in the open sea,” he said. “Some were children.”

A spokesperson for the Alarm Phone refugee aid organisation said, “This is a massacre at Europe’s borders. What else can we say? We have called for radical changes for years and still the dying continues. It is devastating.”

Charities say people smugglers are taking advantage of calmer waves in autumn to send boats across the Mediterranean.

These traffickers are small-time gangsters whose exploitative business model is based on the

European Union’s border regime.

Refugees would not be forced to rely on smugglers if they had safe and legal routes to safety in Europe.

Repression

Meanwhile, refugees who make it to Europe face more repression and racism. Around 50 people being held at Penally camp, near Tenby in west Wales, protested last week over living conditions inside.

They are demanding that the Home Office shuts the camp and rehouses them in decent and safe accommodation.

Supporters of Stand Up To Racism West Wales held a solidarity protest outside the camp last Saturday.

The group has been mobilising against far right attempts to intimidate refugees at the camp.



Abortion protests undermine Polish Nazis

Mass demonstrations meant the Independence Day March was much smaller, reports **Andy Zebrowski**

THIS YEAR'S fascist-led Independence March in Poland was a flop.

For years, the 11 November march has attracted tens of thousands of people. But Wednesday saw only thousands on the streets of Warsaw—the smallest march in ten years.

This year the organisers realised that they would not be able to attract as big a turnout as before.

So they said the march would take the form of a cavalcade of cars, motorbikes and bicycles.

They claimed that this was because of coronavirus. This was a lie—behind the scenes, they were busy inviting supporters to come to Warsaw by train and take part in the march on foot.

Why was the march so much smaller this year?

The widespread mass women's demonstrations of the last three weeks have undermined support for the far right. According to one poll in September, the Confederacy—a coalition of fascists and extreme neoliberals—had 8.2 percent support.

At the beginning of November, it was only 4.4 percent.

Since 22 October, streets all over the country—even in the smallest towns—have been taken over by abortion rights protesters.

Altogether the protests number hundreds of thousands of people.

Outrageous

These demonstrations followed an outrageous decision by the rigged Constitutional Tribunal. It makes abortion illegal in cases where the foetus has severe defects.

The outrage has not abated. The demonstrations are continuing and can still attract thousands of people. The connection between the women's protests and anti-fascism is becoming increasingly clear.

The extreme right wants the abortion law to be made as harsh as possible. Anti-fascist slogans are common on demonstrations.

The fascists of the newly formed

BACK STORY

Massive pro-choice protests took place across Poland at the end of last month

● Some 100,000 people joined a pro-choice march in Warsaw

● A poll found that 80 percent of people in Poland were against harsher abortion laws

● The government tried to restrict protests to no more than ten

● But protesters defied state attempts to intimidate them off the streets

National Guard are among those who have attacked the women's protests. This fascist combat outfit was created by Robert Bakiewicz who is also the main organiser and spokesperson for the Independence March.

The government has encouraged the fascists for five years. They will carry on doing so but this year their strategy failed miserably.

We need to stress two things about the fascist march.

Brutality

First, the brutality of the fascists shows they pose a real threat. We need to oppose them whenever we can.

Second, we have seen that they can be undermined by mass protests, sometimes over other issues.

The huge reduction in their numbers on 11 November will convince many more people that they can be beaten.

Our small organisation has given out thousands of leaflets and sold hundreds of papers on the Women's protests. People have used the front page as a placard.

It says, "We want choice, not terror—abortion on demand."

Andy Zebrowski is a member of Pracownicza Demokracja (Workers' Democracy), the sister organisation of the Socialist Workers Party in Poland

ABORTION RIGHTS protesters in Warsaw

Teachers in France strike over safety

by **CHARLIE KIMBER**

TEACHERS IN France struck and demonstrated in large numbers on Tuesday of last week demanding coronavirus safety. But they also raised many other educational demands.

In particular there was bitter anger against Jean-Michel Blanquer, the national education minister, who has been ramming through neoliberal attacks for years.

The government has continued to keep schools open, to refuse mass recruitment of staff, and offer only the most basic safety measures.

In Paris, several thousand teachers marched and assembled

in front of the ministry of national education.

There were also demonstrations in Dieppe, Rouen, Havre, Evreux, Nantes, Clermont-Ferrand, Montpellier, Le Mans, Troyes, Bordeaux, Marseille, Clermont-Ferrand and Montauban.

The SUD Education union said, "Further local actions are already planned, from the end of the week and the beginning of next week, including on Thursday 12 and Tuesday 17 November."

"SUD Education calls on staff to participate massively in all actions."

Only more struggle can win against the toxic government.

FIGURE IT OUT

44,548

The total number of deaths from Covid-19 in France as of Monday

1 million

Cases of the virus have been recorded in the country

100%

The amount of learning time education minister Jean-Michel Blanquer wants students to spend in schools

Jerusalem settlements plan

ISRAEL has announced plans to build over 1,000 new settlement buildings in occupied East Jerusalem.

It wants to break up Palestinian life in the city.

The new buildings—added to existing settlements—would cut through the Palestinian majority neighbourhoods Beit Safafa and Sharafat.

This would deny Palestinians any hope of claiming East Jerusalem as the capital of any future state of their own.

Israel invaded and occupied East Jerusalem in 1967.

Since then it has built large settlement "neighbourhoods" for its own citizens there in order to insist it should be part of Israel. US president

Donald Trump said in 2017 that he regarded the whole of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

This undermined the false promise of a "two state solution" used to buy off Palestinian politicians.

Now Israel's government wants to grab what land it can before Trump leaves in January next year.

Nick Clark

A Palestinian looks on at settlements

Police advert was racist

THE STAND Up To Racism (SUTR) group in Dorset, recently found a racially discriminatory Facebook post shown on the Weymouth and Portland Police website.

The image was a photo of a young black teenager alongside the caption, "County Lines—We Need Your Help to Stop It".

This implies that black men are the ones responsible for drug trafficking. SUTR quickly put out a statement that this image was unacceptable and racist.

The deputy chief constable of Dorset Police was then forced to issue an apology to "those who felt offended" and the image was withdrawn.

The deputy chief constable's remark, "to those who felt offended" implies that some, not all people may find the image offensive.

This is disgraceful and very worrying when we all need to be working hard to eradicate racial prejudice, including in public bodies.

The attitude of the police explains why Dorset is one of the most racially prejudiced forces in England and Wales according to their stop and search practices.

This serious problem in Dorset will not be challenged by central government as it was the home office that made the image that Dorset police used.

And that begs the question, how many more police forces are using it?

Mary Mullett
Dorset



ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

Don't be fooled by the false promise of nuclear jobs

SOCIALISTS AND environmental campaigners should have no illusions in nuclear power.

It is a technology that is dirty, dangerous, economically and environmentally unsustainable.

Green technologies such as solar and wave are cheaper to produce and maintain, and produce less CO2 emissions in their production.

The challenge of the safe disposal of radioactive nuclear waste has still to be solved.

And the scale of deadly contamination of land, sea and air in the event of accidents such as in Chernobyl and Fukushima is so vast as to defy the imagination.

So why is the British government announcing support for the outrageously expensive Sizewell plant in Suffolk? In addition there

are 16 "mini-nuclear plants" proposed by Rolls-Royce and funded by taxpayers.

This promise is especially insulting considering that Unite union members are currently on strike at the Barnoldswick Rolls-Royce engine plant in Lancashire after 350 jobs were put at risk.

Each mini-plant would cost £2 billion to build and deploy, and won't be ready for at least ten years.

This is way too late for the level of global heating emissions reduction essential to prevent climate catastrophe.

Small nuclear power stations pose similar risks of radioactive gas releases and weapons proliferation as big ones.

The idea of "nuclear" as "safe

green energy" maintains the political propaganda support for nuclear weapons as a "deterrent."

Nuclear has made big profits for private businesses because of the massive subsidies from taxpayers and the high price of electricity compared with renewables. Now even that is not assured.

Trade unionists should not believe in the promise of 6,000 new construction and maintenance jobs in this filthy nuclear industry.

We should fight for the creation of a million green jobs to transfer production from the carbon industries to sustainable production of green energy and carbon-zero infrastructure.

Tony Staunton

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, national council member, Plymouth

Climate tax puts blame 'Unity' call won't end the witch hunt in the wrong place

AS SOMEONE who has been vegan for the past three and a half years, I understand the idea that reducing meat consumption can benefit the environment.

What infuriates me, however, are the calls for a tax on meat by the UK Alliance on Climate. This puts the burden on us.

This climate tax would compound the struggle working class people have trying to feed their families.

Veganism is a choice not available to all. But the responsibility for the

destruction of the environment must be placed on corporate interests. It is their exploitation of natural resources that is destructive to our climate.

What is needed now is education on the consequences of meat consumption on the environment.

But we also need provision of alternative, affordable products, rather than penalising those who cannot afford veganism.

Luke
Cambridge

THE SUSPENSION of Jeremy Corbyn for his response to the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) inquiry into antisemitism in the Labour Party has thrown attacks on Labour's left into sharp relief.

This is an attack that extends beyond Labour.

Roger McKenzie, one of Britain's leading black, anti-racist, trade union voices—and a candidate in the current election for Unison general secretary is the latest prominent target of the witch hunt.

Labour's left finds

themselves in a vice. They face a ban on constituency parties (CLPs) discussing the EHRC report. Defiance risks suspension and expulsion.

Left statements and CLP motions avoid defending Corbyn's assertion of political motivation behind the exaggerated claims of the scale of antisemitism. But this is what his suspension hinges upon.

Instead they are framed as appeals to democracy and "unity".

Meanwhile suspensions are contested on a case by case basis or legal action

rather than through an open collective campaign.

This will not stop the political witch hunt. And it allows further space for the right to extend its attack.

Rob Ferguson
East London

Just a thought...

Trump's not a fascist

AS SOCIALIST Worker has argued, Donald Trump is a racist but not a fascist.

Trump welcomed the appearance of right wing militias on the streets to counter the Black Lives Matter movement.

But he did not come to power as a fascist at the head of such an organised gang of thugs.

The US ruling class has no need at the moment to look to such forces outside of liberal democracy to save itself.

But that may not always be the case.

John Shemeld
Nottingham

Antisemitism is weaponised

THE US administration recently tweeted that president Trump is considering branding Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch as antisemitic.

Once, former president George W Bush's policy was "either you are with us or against us" as he announced the war on terror.

Today, it is either you are with us or you are antisemitic.

The suspension of Jeremy Corbyn is a suspension of the anti-war campaign, of justice for Palestine and of peace and equality.

Yousef
By email

Tory failures inevitable

MAYBE IF the Tories hadn't spent more than a decade decimating health, social and community care.

Maybe if they'd pumped billions into the NHS things with the virus would be very different. But what would I know? I never went to Eton

Jo Hudson
On Facebook

Unelected have influence

GREEN projects apparently advocated for by Boris Johnson's partner Carrie Symonds have been approved.

New green policy is welcome of course.

But I'm again uncomfortable with unelected figures having such sway over the government.

Samira R
East London

BATTERED, BETRAYED BUT STILL FIGHTING

As the inquiry into the Grenfell Tower fire continues, many of those struggling as a result of the fire are being sidelined. Isabel Ringrose spoke to survivors and others affected about how their lives have been turned upside down—and how they are still organising to fight back

IT IS three years and five months since the Grenfell Tower fire. But survivors, the bereaved and others who have been affected still don't have justice. Phase Two of the inquiry into the fire is revealing the corporate greed of the companies responsible for the 2016 renovation that caused it.

Those whose lives have been torn apart are fighting for the truth with little or no support from the council and government.

Joseph, a survivor who lived in Grenfell, told Socialist Worker, “For me it has been like a nightmare. I’m still in temporary housing.

“Things have been really difficult mentally as well. It’s been really hard to cope. It’s hard to go about your daily living and do things you want to.

“I’ve had mental health support, but I haven’t had much support from the council. I’ve been forgotten as a survivor in the tower. But I’m still here and still fighting.”

Joseph explained what he needs to be able to start healing.

“For me, I need some truth,” he said. “I need people to be found guilty. If it was me or someone else, apart from the ministry or council, you’d have been in jail already.

“Why are they getting away with it, yet for a simple crime on the street you get put away? It shouldn’t be any different.”

Since the fire, life for those affected has been extremely difficult. The fire, and poor housing in general, hits black and working class people the most.

As Joseph pointed out, there were no “rich people” in the tower. “It was a poor block, so they didn’t care about people,” he said.

Ten years of Tory austerity, including cuts to mental health services, means many people can’t get the support that would make a difference.

Bea, who lives near Grenfell, told Socialist Worker, “I think a lot of people are still in shock. They still haven’t got their lives back together and haven’t been allowed to move on properly.”

The Royal Borough of

“People’s lives have been ruined. They feel very raw and Covid-19 has added to the fear

Grenfell campaigner joins protest outside phase 2 of the inquiry (below) PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN



Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) is the richest borough in Britain. Yet alongside this immense wealth, people suffer trauma and injustice because conscious decisions were made to put profit before safety.

This also makes it one of the most unequal boroughs. And the pandemic has meant more poverty and housing problems.

“We chant ‘72 plus’ for those who were killed by negligence of the government and housing policies,” said Bea. “Plus those who have taken their lives subsequently, or died of heart attacks and stress since.

“People’s lives have been ruined.”

Grenfell campaigner Moyra told Socialist Worker, “People feel very raw and vulnerable. Covid-19 has added to the fear. People are going to be impacted even further by loss of job income.

“This is an enormous emotional battle.”

Moyra said many people feel “quite battered, betrayed and abandoned”. “We’ve been left in tatters and been dropped,” she said.

“There’s a sense that people have lost any faith in democracy and justice. They just feel like they’re collateral damage.

“None of the recommendations have been implemented. That stands in the way of people recovering from trauma and

grief. Once there is recognition that a wrong has been done they can start to heal, but the community is in limbo.”

MPs voted against implementing the safety recommendations from Phase One of the inquiry in September. This was despite government claims that it was “doing everything in our power” to implement them.

Nathaniel is writing a play about the events leading up to the fire. He told Socialist Worker, “There’s been a great deal of mental illness for people who survived and witnessed the fire.

Furious

“The community wants to see people in jail, but the big fear is that there will be no convictions. It happened at Hillsborough where no one went to jail.”

And many local people are furious at the response from the government and the council.

Marianne, a Grenfell activist, told Socialist Worker, “People have been abandoned.

“We’re fighting so every family can sleep safe at night in the confidence that they will be okay. People have been treated so poorly, and we want to stop this happening across the rest of the country.

“The government should treat us as they would treat their own families. They wouldn’t let this happen to them.

“It’s heartbreaking. MPs went back to parliament to vote on implementing the

recommendations and didn’t. They had previously talked to the bereaved and we thought they felt our pain.”

Local resident Carol told Socialist Worker that the council needs to “work with us and actually start asking” what people need.

Leearna, a local activist, agreed. “RBKC were late on the scene,” she told Socialist Worker.

“They gave us a lot of fluff about recovery. They promised to listen, but they don’t want to hear. Recovery has been shaped around what they think we need.

“And for them, Covid-19 means they can ignore Grenfell demands. North Kensington is seen as low class and money is pushed into Chelsea.

“They set up Grenfell Assembly, and got rid of Grenfell Scrutiny. This was where the community would meet and ask questions to people in the council who were responsible.

“It was a chance to feel that we’re making sure they knew their failures. But at the Grenfell Assembly there is no discussion—they just collect our ideas and say they’ll answer them.”

Moyra added, “A lesson the community

Tory MP and former merchant banker Felicity Christiana Buchan (below) she pledged to implement the Grenfell Inquiry’s recommendations but then voted against doing so

RESISTANCE

Solidarity for people abandoned by system

WORKING CLASS people abandoned by the authorities have come together to support each other in the wake of the Grenfell Fire.

Marianne said, “The Ladbroke Grove community are family to each other. If you hurt one of us, you’re hurting all of us. We want Justice for Grenfell.”

Carol said ordinary people had been “fantastic”. “If it wasn’t for the community I would’ve sunk”, she explained.

“And the community needs justice. Put those responsible in jail. RBKC needs to be put in special measures and completely start again.”

Joseph added, “Those fighting the fight encourage me to stay strong. The community is super important. They are fully supportive and united.

“They appreciate us and respect us and we appreciate and respect them. For me they have been there from the start.

“The council has not been

INQUIRY

Protesters say getting justice means ‘jail time’ for bosses

THE GRENFELL weekly protest took place outside the inquiry on Thursday of last week to demand justice.

The inquiry has heard further evidence from Celotex, the company that produced the insulation used on Grenfell.

Celotex’s sales manager admitted that the marketing was misleading. The firm claimed that insulation was “suitable for buildings above 18 metres in height”.

But on Wednesday, the inquiry heard that this claim could only be made with an “extremely important caveat”. The insulation had only passed a fire safety test within a specific cladding system. This was not put on Grenfell.

Celotex saw Grenfell as a “flagship” for its product and exploited the “smoke of confusion” surrounding building regulations.

On Thursday the inquiry heard that the insulation was actually a rebrand of a product that had failed fire tests. The rebrand aimed to compete with rival firm Kingspan.

“Everything is coming out now, so many dark stories are being unravelled. It’s hard to cope.

Carol called Celotex “sick profiteers”. Leearna said, “I used to follow the inquiry rigidly, but I can’t now. It’s too distressing. I’m traumatised from what happened.

“We started protesting after a survivor who lost his wife in the fire tried to get into the inquiry but was rudely told he couldn’t.

“They wouldn’t even let him use the toilet. It’s not good enough, so we decided someone needs to be here.”

Bea said, “I can barely look at the news. I’ve stopped following the inquiry and reading reports. It’s horrendous. And there’s been a huge push to blame other organisations. It’s so frustrating.

Cladding

“The government needs to spend the money they said they would and rip this cladding out of people’s houses. Justice means jail time and a significant change to regulations.”

The protest was loud with chanting, whistles and horns to show that ordinary people will not stop fighting.

“We will fight, united,” said Joseph. “We have to show them no matter what they do to us we’re still standing and willing to fight.

“Everything is coming out now, so many dark stories are being unravelled. It’s hard for me to cope with all this evidence coming out.

“It’s super difficult and so many things have been hidden. They set a death trap for us and forced people inside.

“But we’re not going anywhere and we’re not giving up. No justice, no peace.”

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements. The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602 for more information

Socialist Workers Party online meetings



The Socialist Workers Party is holding online meetings during the coronavirus crisis. This is to ensure that there can still be collective local discussion, organising and actions.

Most of the meetings will be held using the Zoom system. Download the Zoom app onto your phone or computer and just before the time given for your local meeting ask to "Join a meeting".

You can then enter the number printed on this page for the appropriate meeting. **The password for all meetings is 967537.**

Make sure you look at the SWP Facebook page facebook.com/SocialistWorkersParty for news of national online meetings and other updates.

Fighting for abortion rights—in the US, Poland and Britain

| | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| BLACK COUNTRY Wed 25 Nov, 7.30pm 352 891 2411 | CAMBRIDGE Thu 26 Nov, 7.30pm 681 800 4408 | KENT Thu 26 Nov, 8.15pm 434 623 8064 | LONDON: NEWHAM Wed 2 Dec, 7.30pm 288 098 8827 |
| BOLTON & WIGAN Thu 26 Nov, 7pm 872 5136 9540 | CHESTERFIELD Thu 26 Nov, 6.30pm 829 532 8731 | LONDON: ISLINGTON Thu 3 Dec, 7pm 874 012 7970 | |

SOCIALIST WORKER
PUBLIC MEETINGS

MANCHESTER
Engels @200—a socialist celebration of his revolutionary life

Wed 25 Nov,
7.15pm
323 178 7 151

SOCIALIST WORKER
ONLINE MEETINGS

Weekly meetings to discuss political issues and local interventions. All welcome.

BIRMINGHAM
Uprising in Belarus—can workers win?

Wed 2 Dec,
7pm
281 634 5938

BRADFORD
Is there a north-south divide?

Thu 26 Nov,
7pm
885 9187 7552

BRIGHTON AND HOVE
The human brain and the politics of the mind

Thu 26 Nov,
6.30pm
818 1857 1448

BRISTOL
Marxism and mental distress in a time of pandemics

Thu 26 Nov,
7.30pm
688 397 3148

BURNLEY AND PENDLE
Islamophobia and racism—the politics of fear

Wed 25 Nov,
7.30pm
446 409 5118

CARDIFF
Why are women still oppressed?

Wed 25 Nov,
7.30pm
630 181 4857

COLCHESTER
Crisis and polarisation—where next after the US election?

Thu 26 Nov, 7pm
872 3074 2363

COVENTRY
Why is Macron waging war on Muslims?

Wed 25 Nov,
7.30pm
823 945 1917

DUNDEE, ABERDEEN AND PERTH
How do we win Scottish independence?

Wed 25 Nov,
7.30pm
894 2628 7708

EAST MIDLANDS
How would socialists deal with a pandemic?

Wed 25 Nov,
7pm
354 874 4790

EDINBURGH
France—Macron, racism and Islamophobia

Wed 25 Nov,
7.30pm
431 459 112

GLASGOW
Know your enemy—alt-right, the far right and fascists

Thu 26 Nov,
6.30pm

851 5254 7239
HUDDERSFIELD
How would socialists deal with a pandemic?

Thu 26 Nov,
7pm
290 168 1804

LANCASTER AND MORECAMBE
Capitalism, diet and the politics of food

Thu 26 Nov,
6.30pm
992 204 9372

LEEDS
Is anarchism more radical than socialism?

Thu 26 Nov, 7pm
935 5290 8076

LIVERPOOL
Covid-19 and the economic crisis—how can we make the rich pay?

Wed 25 Nov,
7pm
493 925 5919

LONDON: HACKNEY
#EndSARS—what's behind the revolt in Nigeria?

Thu 26 Nov,
7.30pm

798 534 2585
LONDON: HARINGEY
How can Palestine be free?

Wed 2 Dec, 7.30pm
459 388 1576

LONDON: SOUTH
Beating back the fascist threat—lessons from Greece

Wed 25 Nov, 7pm
497 196 1801

LONDON: SOUTH EAST
Conspiracy theories and the far right—how should socialists respond?

Thu 26 Nov, 7pm
529 913 6390

LONDON: TOWER HAMLETS
How would socialists deal with a pandemic?

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Powerful, and long overdue, tale of a struggle for justice

The first film in Steve McQueen's Small Axe series tells the true story of the Mangrove Nine. Moyra Samuels says it's a vital, if overlooked, part of history

SMALL AXE, directed by Steve McQueen takes its title from the Bob Marley song.

"So if you are the big tree, We are the small axe Ready to cut you down, (well sharp), To cut you down."

It's a series of five discrete films of different lengths based on the life of "West Indians" in London. Mangrove is first.

The film recounts the story of the police harassment of the Mangrove restaurant in the late 1960s in west London. Nine people were arrested and tried at the Old Bailey following a demonstration against police brutality which passed various police stations.

It begins in the late 1960s with aerial views of Notting Hill and the derelict housing. Children play on the scrap heaps of demolished homes where the Westway motorway was being built. A sign on a fence reads "Powell"—racist Tory Enoch Powell—"for PM".

Amid all this, on All Saints Road, is the Mangrove restaurant, founded by a Trinidadian, Frank Critchlow.

It has gathered a reputation for more than its Caribbean food and attracts high profile customers such as Jimi Hendrix, Diana Ross and Vanessa Redgrave.

Home

It's also a "home from home" for many of the Windrush generation and serves as a meeting place for the British Black Panthers.

The first quarter of the film slowly introduces the audience to the four main protagonists—Critchlow, Altheia Jones-LeCointe, Darcus Howe and Barbara Beese.

We are also introduced to the notorious racist PC Frank Pulley. He leads



LETITIA WRIGHT as Altheia Jones-LeCointe

the regular raids on the Mangrove and the stop and search, beatings and baseless arrests of young black men.

This stark moment reveals how little aspects of British policing have not changed.

The trial of the nine defendants is compelling and convincingly delivered by a talented crew and cast of actors. Howe and Jones-LeCointe represent themselves in court. With the support of the legendary barrister

Ian Macdonald. The racist judiciary of the time is on display.

Letitia Wright—known for her role as Shuri in the film *Black Panther*—gets to play a real life Panther, Jones Le-Cointe.

Jones-LeCointe is described by the dub poet Linton Kwesi Johnson as "the most remarkable woman I have ever met."

She came to London in 1965 to complete a PhD in biochemistry and became one of the founders of the Black British Panthers.

Skills

Her organising role, speaking skills and political contribution to the struggle has been brushed over like so many of the black women activists of the time. Barbara Beese, who stood in the dock with her, is another example.

Mangrove is a story long overdue and well worth telling. Steve McQueen does a great job bringing attention to the trial—the first trial to acknowledge the racism of the Metropolitan Police.

Five were acquitted of all charges against them. Rupert Boyce, Rhodan Gordon, Anthony Innis and Jones-LeCointe received suspended sentences for a number of lesser offences, including affray and assaulting police officers.

As Darcus Howe—played by a charismatic Malachi Kirby—says, the trial "has seared the consciousness of the Black community to an extent that the history of Britain cannot now be written without it".

Mangrove is now on BBC iPlayer. The next in the Small Axe series, *Lovers Rock*, is on BBC 1, 9pm, Sunday 22 November, and then on iPlayer

Ghosts—a good read that can't quite drop the cliches

NOVEL

GHOSTS

By Dolly Alderton

APPROACHING her 32nd birthday, Nina Dean has pretty much got her life together. She has a newly-bought flat in north London, a food writing job she loves and a brilliant group of friends.

But then, after being persuaded to "put herself out there", she tries to find a relationship using online dating platform Lynx.

Although the formula is

a well trodden one, *Ghosts* is an enjoyable read, and it's relatable.

The title comes from the practice of "ghosting"—where people in casual relationships simply disappear without warning.

Anyone caught in the endless Tinder cycle of swiping and going on uninspiring dates in expensive pubs can recognise the moments of enjoyment and frustration.

But it never quite steps out of an easy breezy romcom-esque pace. It's a

shame that author Dolly Alderton isn't given more space to say the more interesting things. A lot of time is given over to pouring scorn on women holding expensive hen parties, for instance.

But something I would have loved to hear more about is how Nina deals

with her dad's rapidly developing dementia.

Here, Nina blames her mother for how she looks after him, and is at her ugliest but also her most real as a character.

Mother of two Katherine, and perennially single Lola, are characters of the apparently two life directions women go in during their thirties.

It sails uncomfortably close to tropes at times. It's painstakingly

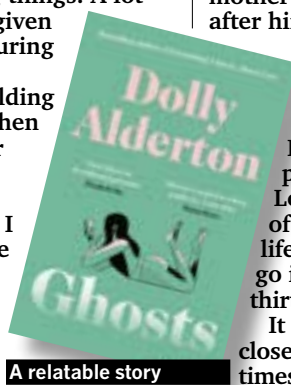
pointed out time and again that Katherine, with her house in Surrey, wants more freedom.

Meanwhile, yoga and brunch-loving Lola craves the security of a long term relationship.

Ghosts is an enjoyable look at the ties that can bind us, and how easily—

and traumatically—these can be severed. And it's probably more satisfying to read than the prospect of spending a few hours looking for a Lynx date of your own.

Sarah Bates



A relatable story

EXHIBITION

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: THE FIGHT FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Online at bl.uk/events/unfinished-business

THIS MAJOR exhibition celebrating struggles for women's liberation is closed for lockdown.

But in its place the British Library has uploaded a vast amount of material to a dedicated part of its website.

One section features articles, photos and audio on disputes and direct action.

Journalist and writer Amrit Wilson remembers



Sophia Duleep Singh

the Grunwick strike of 1976, in a short audio recording.

In the landmark battle, mostly Asian women struck at a photo processing plant in north London.

Meanwhile Sundari Anitha and Ruth Pearson write about the events leading up to the dispute and its significance today.

In another article, Kelly Foster and A S Francis look at the lives and legacies of black women activists.

There's a photograph of Jamaican activist Amy Ashwood Garvey speaking



Amy Ashwood Garvey

at the Pan-African Congress in Manchester in 1945.

Another picture shows leading women's suffrage campaigner Sophia Duleep Singh selling the *Suffragette* newspaper.

A section on "changing attitudes" looks at gains made by women.

There's a wealth of resources on the Women's Liberation Movement and abortion rights, and campaigns for equal pay.

Mary Wollstonecraft is often credited as one of the pioneers of the fight for women's liberation.

She gave a voice to the reality of women's lives in the 1790s and raged against an unequal society as a whole.

She argued that reducing women to sexual objects, to prisoners in unhappy marriages and to domestic servitude wasted their potential, and society suffered as well.

Wollstonecraft was highly influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment.

It was a philosophical school of thought that emphasised individual liberty and rational reason, rather than traditional social norms or societal hierarchies.

But to truly understand Wollstonecraft, it is best to look at the revolutionary events that shaped her life.

She supported the American revolution in the 1770s but was completely transformed by the French Revolution of 1789.

She travelled to France during the revolution to see it for herself.

It was the political event that had the greatest impact on Wollstonecraft's life.

THE French Revolution was a bourgeois revolution which deposed the king and aristocracy but solidified a new era of capitalism across the nation.

However, it also saw an increase in freedom, a mushrooming of political organisation among the middle class and the poor, and the spread of progressive ideas.

The call for "liberty, equality and fraternity" went across the land as ordinary people burst on the stage of history to demand more rights and an end to poverty.

Many of the people at the heart of the revolution believed that equality would be delivered by an educated elite handing down ideas to those below them.

But the era of revolution also encouraged radical thought.

Wollstonecraft's first political pamphlet—A Vindication of the Rights of Men—was a blistering defence of the uprising.

It was written in response to politician Edmund Burke's attack on the revolution.

In Rights of Men she railed against unequal societies and defended women who led the charge in the revolution.

Wollstonecraft complained bitterly of the existing social order, of kings, queens, army generals and church bishops.

She described the revolution as a "glorious chance to obtain more virtue and happiness than hitherto blessed our globe". Her



THE FRENCH revolution had a profound effect on Wollstonecraft

FIGHTING FOR WOMEN TO BE FREE

The erection of a statue of Mary Wollstonecraft in north London has sparked controversy, Sarah Bates goes beyond the headlines to explore her life and legacy



Rousseau—opponent

defence of it launched her as a celebrity.

That's not to say life in France was easy for Wollstonecraft.

Repression against those trying to roll back the revolution was in full swing. As an English migrant, suspicion fell on her that she wasn't a true supporter of the republic.

But despite this, she told her sister Everina, "I certainly am glad that I came to France, because I never could else have had a just opinion of the most

a growing working class would organise themselves.

Wollstonecraft is best known for her groundbreaking 1794 text, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.

Biographer Claire Tomalin writes, "She made no attempt to study the history of the subject or do any special reading or research. In fact she spent something like six weeks in all upon A Vindication Of The Rights of Women."

Like its predecessor Rights of Man, it was written as an intervention into a raging argument.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU, a prominent philosopher argued in his book Emile that women were less rational than men and less deserving of education.

"Once it is demonstrated that man and woman are not, and should not be constituted the same, either in character or in temperament, it follows that they should not do the same things," he wrote.

And he argued that although women relied on men, they held a seductive power over them and they would lose their charm if they were better educated.

"This is the very point I aim it at," Wollstonecraft fired back. "I do not wish them to have power over men, but over themselves."

In Rights of Women she argues that women should be treated not just as adjuncts of men, but as individuals within their own right.

She argued that equality would make women better "companions" to their husbands, rather than subservient wives.

THERE IS also an idealisation of family life. Wollstonecraft wanted a more equal relationship between man and wife, but one where the institution was fundamentally unchanged.

She was also uncompromising on how women's looks are prized above anything else and they were forced to become "insignificant objects of desire."

"Taught from their infancy that beauty is a woman's sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and, roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison," she wrote.

Although she said women had been infantilised by a society that treated them like children, she also blasted them as being undereducated and obsessed with trivial matters.

She said society had turned women, particularly those in the middle and upper classes, into "a deluge of false sentiments and overstretched feelings" and suffering from "a kind of sickly delicacy that turns away from simple unadorned truth".

Wollstonecraft didn't live the life of frivolity she scorned

others for, taking jobs as a governess and a "lady's companion" she was around the middle class but not entirely a part of it.

Like many others, she was caught in a process where class positions were changing and being challenged.

Her experience of family in her early life would go on to influence her writing for many years to come.

A young Wollstonecraft used to sleep on the landing to try to protect her mother from her father's beatings.

And her brother Ned was given high quality education while she only went to school for a few years.

Critically, rather than locate the social norms as some sort of "natural" order between the sexes, she said the differences were because of conditions within society.

Wollstonecraft said that women's oppression also harmed men and it "was as bad for men to be domestic tyrants as to be kings."

She wanted women to have genuine financial independence for men. She also demanded that women should be trained properly for professions such as in medicine and shopkeeping.

Some of her demands were less radical.

FOR example, Wollstonecraft claimed that women should educate themselves into the middle class but that rich and poor children should be schooled separately.

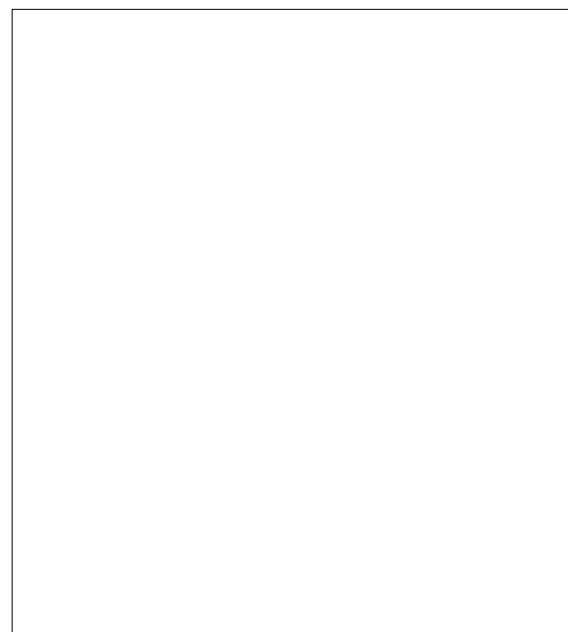
She didn't develop an in-depth analysis of wider social, or economic factors affecting women.

But that doesn't detract from her grappling with how women could achieve independence from men, while forming emotional connections with them.

The 223 years since her death has stirred up more controversy about Wollstonecraft than when she was alive.

A memoir written by her husband William Godwin shortly after her death provoked moral outrage at her pregnancies out of marriage and romantic affairs.

His revelations about her life turned the tide against Wollstonecraft among polite society. In 1799 the Historical Magazine said that her work should be read "With disgust by any female who has any pretensions to delicacy,



A portrait of Wollstonecraft (top) A plaque to her in north London (above)

with detestation by everyone attached to the interests of religion and morality".

She faded from infamy into relative obscurity, but her ideas have been read and debated in every upsurge of the Women's Liberation Movement since.

She had fans in everyone from early suffrage campaigner Millicent Fawcett, to anarchist and activist Emma Goldman and authors Jane Austen and Virginia Woolf.

The 1970s saw a flourishing of analysis of Wollstonecraft's work as a new generation of women looked for ideas.

It is perhaps best to remember Wollstonecraft in her own words.

She was someone who tirelessly campaigned for women to be able to choose her "own whims where they lead, without having a husband and half a hundred children at hand to tease and control a woman who wishes to be free."

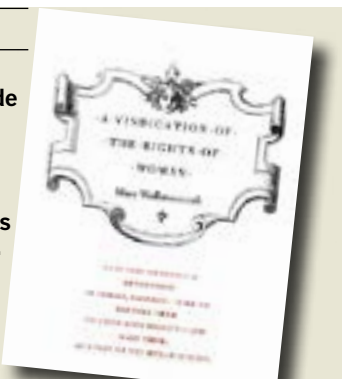
READ MORE

● **A Vindication of the Rights of Woman** by Mary Wollstonecraft £4.99

● **The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft** by Claire Tomalin £10.99

● **Sexism and the System: A Rebel's Guide to Women's Liberation** Judith Orr £4

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FOCUS ON RACISM

Why using 'coloured' turns back the clock on progress

Yuri Prasad says arguments about language reflect much deeper political issues about how society sees people, and how they see themselves

GREG CLARKE'S forced resignation as chair of the Football Association last week for describing black players as "coloured" will have stirred uncomfortable memories for many.

From the 1950s to the 80s it was common for anyone non-white to be labelled this way, especially by older generations.

Doubtless, some thought it a more polite way to describe us.

But it always felt like an insult—in much the same way they often called mixed heritage people "half-caste" rather than "mongrel".

"Coloured" was a legacy of Empire, a shorthand for describing the natives in broadly racial terms.

Now it was used to remind us of our colonial origins—and our supposed inferiority.

Different

But outside Britain its meaning was different.

In the Caribbean and in apartheid South Africa, the term generally applied to those of mixed heritage.

In Brazil it was the chosen description of a layer of black people who wanted to put distance between themselves and their African heritage.

But its most acknowledged use was in the US, in the racially segregated Deep South. There the famous signs designated drinking fountains and waiting rooms for "Whites" and "Coloreds".

Like the word "Negro", coloured was until the late 1960s a term accepted by most people, black and white. It was supposedly politically neutral—a word used in law and polite society.

That's why the most famous campaign against racism was called the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. It was why civil

A SEGREGATED water cooler in Oklahoma in 1939

rights leader Martin Luther King spoke of "citizens of colour" in his 1963 March on Washington speech.

But no one could escape the fact that coloured was a word that had been foisted upon black people.

The terms to describe them had emerged from those who held the whip on the plantation fields.

Allowing oppressors the right to label those they oppressed had deep implications. It made it easier to accept their ideas too.

Notions of inferiority, so common among racists, could also find a home among some black people.

Those who grew up with the Civil Rights Movement were determined that they would find their own word to describe themselves. That word was "black".

But the teenagers of the 1960s weren't the first to reach this conclusion.

The effort to replace Negro and coloured with black had already built up a head of steam in nationalist circles in the 1950s.

It had a big influence on the cultural Avant Garde, and

jazz in particular. These in turn drew on the Negritude cultural movement that began in France in the 1930s.

Language wasn't the only battle over identity that emerged from the civil rights struggles.

Notions of beauty and body image were also in the firing line.

In many ways these issues fused under the mid-1960s slogan "Black is Beautiful". This in time was rebadged as the "Black Revolution" by radicals.

Singer Aretha Franklin was one of those who embraced the concept.

"It wasn't that we were all that ashamed of ourselves, we merely started appreciating our natural selves," she said.

"Sort of, you know, falling in love with ourselves just as we are."

Blackness

The new notion of blackness spread quickly around the world.

In South Africa anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko fashioned it into the Black Consciousness Movement.

In Britain, black replaced coloured as the accepted term for people of an African-Caribbean background.

But it also developed as a political description of all those who faced racism.

Those who today use the word "coloured" as a racial term are not just breaking a politically correct taboo.

They are turning back the clock on generations of struggle of oppressed people to determine for themselves how they are described.

“It was a legacy of Empire, a shorthand for describing ‘the natives’

Tariq Ali was spied on for years, inquiry hears

by SIMON BASKETTER

THE MARATHON whitewash of the Undercover Policing Inquiry finally got around to hearing evidence last week.

Five years in, the first witness was Tariq Ali.

In 1968, Tariq was a key member of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign (VSC), and the Ad Hoc Committee, which organised London demonstrations against the war.

Some 80 secret police reports between March 1968 and November 2003 are known to exist on Tariq.

David Barr, Counsel to the Inquiry, used the opportunity to produce Tariq's book *Street Fighting Years* as he read aloud lengthy passages.

Defend

Barr would read a bit of the book and then ask Tariq to defend it.

Barr was interested in the prospect of marbles being used against police horses on demonstrations.

He suggested that an article in the newspaper *Tariq* edited, *Black Dwarf*, telling

people not to bring marbles was actually suggesting they should.

The search for insurrectionary intent on the minds of protesters is never far from the inquiry's mind.

Barr didn't see the need to ask about any police violence on the 1968 anti-war demonstrations. Tariq did mention the injuries to demonstrators due to police violence.

A Special Demonstration Squad report lists 229 names of people identified from the 100,000 people attending the Anti Nazi League's Carnival Against the Nazis in April 1978.

The report is entirely redacted.

There is a document on all those arrested at a demonstration against the National Front in Southall on 23 April 1979. It is also entirely redacted.

This was the demonstration where the cops killed teacher and Socialist Workers Party member Blair Peach.

On the day Tariq was with reggae band *Misty in Roots* when the police charged into the house, and pulled everyone out.

They were made to run a gauntlet, and Tariq was truncheoned and passed out.

Police fractured the skull of *Misty in Roots*' manager Clarence Baker. He was in a coma for five months.

Blair Peach himself had a Special Branch registry file, opened in 1978.

It then said the East London Teachers Association had "come to the notice of Special Branch on numerous occasions".

There were reports of various meetings that Tariq attended over the years including those against the 2003 Iraq war.

Notably Tariq's lawyer was prevented from asking most of his questions to the first police witness by Lord Mitting.

The officer's evidence on infiltrating the anti-war movement was notable for how little the spycop could recall.

The inquiry continues.

Transcripts are available at upci.org.uk

Women were deceived in relationships

AMONG THE opening statements in the previous week were the harrowing stories of women who were deceived into having long-term relationships by undercover police officers.

Phillippa Kaufmann QC said that we now know of more than 30 women who were deceived. The earliest case known dates to 1975.

The women say that extensive anonymity given to former spy cops by the inquiry means that they will continue to be denied the truth.

Written opening statements for the women abused by the cops are, bit.ly/InquiryStatement1 and bit.ly/InquiryStatement2. Many of their stories are also available in more detail at policespiesoutoflives.org.uk/our-stories/

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Universal Credit forces claimants to live in poverty during pandemic

A new TUC survey has exposed what life is really like under the Tories' brutal Universal Credit benefit system. **Sadie Robinson** explores some of the survey's horrific findings

THE Tory benefits system is causing "immense misery" for millions of people in Britain, a TUC survey has found.

The survey, published last week, looked at the impact of forcing new Universal Credit (UC) claimants to wait five weeks for their first payment.

It contained harrowing stories. One woman told the survey, "I suffered a miscarriage and didn't go to the hospital for three days because I could not afford bus fare or parking and was unable to walk."

Another claimant said, "Food for the last two weeks was tight but if you count 500-ish calories on some days I did manage to eat."

Someone else "had to resort to having a meal a day".

The Tories say that new claimants can apply for advance payments while they wait for their benefit to arrive. They say no one needs to be without money.

But this is deducted from people's money—driving them into further poverty and debt, which pushes many to avoid claiming it.

Advance

Some 86 percent of those responding to the TUC survey said getting an advance payment had put more pressure on their budget (see below).

Many claimants told the TUC they had been forced to use food banks or borrow money from elsewhere to get by. Never-ending stress about not having enough money means one in ten respondents said they'd suffered mental health problems.

And being treated like dirt is

"humiliating" for claimants.

"It was very stressful and mentally exhausting," said one. "I found the whole experience to be unjust, shaming and totally unapologetic throughout."

Another UC claimant was suffering "constant worry that I won't be able to afford gas or electric when it runs out".

Being forced to go five weeks without money is bad enough. But some said their wait was even longer.

"My partner made a tiny error on her form and after almost five weeks we contacted to see why nothing was happening," said one respondent.

They ended up with a "ten week wait".

As the Tories continue to refuse to contain coronavirus—and rising unemployment—many more working class people will face this horrific welfare system.

Official figures show that some 5.7 million people were claiming UC on 8 October. This is a 90 percent rise, or 2.7 million, from the three million who were claiming on 12 March.

The TUC rightly said that UC should be scrapped. But the Tories won't drop one of their flagship policies without a fight.

We urgently need resistance to demand a humane benefits system and to stop the jobs massacre.

The TUC survey ran from 19 May to 12 June this year, with 386 responses.

Read it in full at tinyurl.com/y3mrzkkc

Disabled people are hit

Disabled claimants are more likely to have money taken from their benefits for debt repayment, National Audit Office figures show.

Some 61 percent of all claims had a deduction applied to their first payment. But the figure for households including someone with a disability or health condition is 67 percent.

UC means more debt

THE Tories say UC "simplifies" the benefits system. In truth it makes claimants poorer. The StepChange charity found that 25 percent of UC claimants suffer "problem debt". This compares to 11 percent of those receiving the benefits that preceded UC. And it is three times the rate among the general population, which is 8 percent.

How the state snatches millions from the poorest

ADVANCE payments are sold as a way of avoiding hardship. In reality, they pile it on.

They are loans that poor people have to repay from meagre benefits, making it even harder to get by. The government can snatch 30 percent of the standard UC allowance back in repayments. From October next year this will be cut—but the state can still take a quarter of people's benefit.

One claimant told the TUC they were "still struggling month to month" partly due to deductions to cover an advance payment. "After

we've paid our bills, we've got £35 for food, gas and electric," they said.

"How is that viable?"

Over 1.6 million families on UC were having an average of £60 deducted from their benefits in May this year. A staggering £100 million was taken from them.

Some was for other debts such as council tax arrears or to make up for government mistakes, such as overpayment of tax credits.

But 86 percent went towards repaying advance benefits payments.

The Trussell Trust charity said that during

Food bank use is on the rise

the pandemic "73 percent of those that needed a food bank who were receiving UC, were repaying an advance payment".

This compares to

51 percent in early 2020.

The growing economic crisis means more people will be affected by this brutal system. Over a million advance payments were made to

new claimants between the start of lockdown in March and 23 June.

Many more didn't claim because of fear. Citizens Advice said some claimants were "scraping by" because they were too scared of having to repay an advance.

It's no surprise. The TUC survey found long-lasting impacts of the debts. One claimant said they were repaying it for a year, another said the debt was still having an effect "years later". They said, "As a single parent, in work and on benefits, that impact can mean going without essentials."

Savings at record low

THE government assumes that people waiting for benefits can live off savings. But the number of households able to save had reached a record low even before the pandemic hit.

Citizens Advice said some 6.5 million households had no savings at all.

Coronavirus has made this worse.

The poorest 20 percent saw an average monthly fall of £170 in their bank balances between March and September, the Institute for Fiscal Studies said.

Network Rail safety failings led to deaths of two workers

by CHARLIE KIMBER

A REPORT into the deaths of two rail workers in July 2019 has revealed wholly avoidable safety failures.

Michael “Spike” Lewis from North Cornelly and Gareth Delbridge from Kenfig Hill were hit by a Swansea to London train.

They were working on tracks near Port Talbot in South Wales.

The Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB) report released last week said three track workers were working on a line that was open to traffic.

There were no lookouts to warn them of approaching trains.

All three workers were almost certainly wearing ear defenders, because one of them was using a noisy power tool.

They would not have been able to hear the train’s warning horn.

None of them was aware that the train was approaching until it was too late for them to move to a position of safety.

At the time of the deaths a maintenance engineer who had worked on the same stretch of track where the two men were killed told newspapers, “It can be very dangerous.

Money

“The rail gangs tend to come from the South Wales valleys and Merthyr Tydfil areas. Lads can pick up a lot of money but it’s very risky work. It’s danger money.”

In other words, people from areas of low wages and high unemployment risk their lives to make ends meet.

The investigation asked why Network Rail had not created conditions needed to achieve “a significant and sustained improvement in track worker safety”.

This was despite warnings about “too many near misses in which railway workers have had to jump for their lives”.

It concluded, “Over a period of many years, Network Rail had

BACK STORY

A report has revealed dire safety failures by Network Rail bosses

● It looked into the deaths of two rail workers who were hit by a train in July 2019

● The men would not have been warned about the oncoming train and so could not move to safety

● The report said Network Rail knew of the safety problems, but hadn’t taken the action required

● At the time of the deaths, an engineer said the work was “very risky” and “very dangerous”

● The two men, Michael Lewis and Gareth Delbridge, died because profit was the priority

not adequately addressed the protection of track workers from moving trains.

“The major changes required to fully implement significant changes to the standard governing track worker safety were not effectively implemented across Network Rail’s maintenance organisation

“Network Rail’s safety management assurance system was not effective in identifying the full extent of procedural non-compliance and unsafe working practices, and did not trigger the management actions needed to address them

“Although Network Rail had identified the need to take further actions to address track worker safety, these had not led to substantive change prior to the accident at Margam.”

The RAIB does not apportion blame or carry out prosecutions.

But it is clear that, as so often, workers died because their lives were put second to “getting the job done” and making profits.

The top bosses of Network Rail should be facing jail.



On other pages...

Grenfell activists—battered, betrayed, fighting >>> **Pages 10&11**

GARETH Delbridge (above, left) and Michael ‘Spike’ Lewis (above, right) both died in an accident in July 2019 (left). Network Rail knew of safety problems but didn’t take the action required to deal with them, a report has found

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Croydon sends a sign of councils’ crisis

by SARAH BATES

CROYDON COUNCIL in south London has issued a section 114 notice banning all spending except for statutory services for vulnerable people.

It means the Labour-run council is effectively declaring that it is bankrupt.

It’s the first council to take such a measure since Northamptonshire County Council in 2018.

And it’s a sign that a major crisis is hitting local government services.

Officials highlighted extra Covid-19 expenses. Yet Croydon council had a £1.5 billion debt at the start of the pandemic.

Commercial

It has spent hundreds of millions of pounds buying up businesses and commercial properties in the town centre, only for revenue to drop during lockdown.

Council leader Hamid Ali said, “The Covid-19 crisis and a decade

of austerity have had a major impact on our finances.

“But it’s clear the council has also made mistakes, and I am committed to fixing that.”

Yet the council wants ordinary people to pay for its mishandling of cash and Tory austerity—by slashing 400 jobs.

Croydon isn’t alone.

A survey by the County Councils Network said just 22 percent of local authorities are “confident” they can deliver a balanced budget next year without drastic cuts.

And just one of the 36 councils surveyed said they could set a balanced budget for 2022-23.

In Tower Hamlets, east London, fears are growing that the borough’s Idea Stores could be cut. These buildings contain libraries, adult learning services and “digital hubs”.

A report presented to the cabinet last month suggested that Idea Stores services be reduced, and the Cubitt Town Library closed. The report by Neville Burton, corporate director, also

suggested that evening staffing levels be slashed, and Sunday hours are cut from six to four.

A public consultation is due to be begun later this month. The battle has to start now to save vital services and jobs.

Battles

Workers in Tower Hamlets struck over the summer against the Labour-run council’s push to sack and rehire them on worse contracts.

Similar battles are raging elsewhere.

Hundreds of workers at Sandwell Leisure Trust, near Birmingham, are set to strike on 27 November over plans to dismiss and re-engage them.

Bosses want workers to take up new contracts not on the nationally-agreed pay, terms and conditions.

It is possible to beat these serious attacks on public services.

But unions and workers must mount a serious national fightback now.

SCHOOLS

School strike shows determination to win

by MIRIAM SCHARF

A BRILLIANT turnout of lively, dancing, singing people saw over 50 strikers and supporters gather at Little Ilford School in Manor Park on Thursday last week.

More strikes were planned for Wednesday and Thursday this week.

NEU union members at the east London school are resisting the forcible expansion of the school from the present student population of 1,470 to 1,800.

Kate, one of the NEU reps, explained, "The local authority forced this expansion on our school against our wishes."

"The numbers out today shows staff are passionate about education and our kids."

Together

"In 30 years' teaching this is my first local strike. It feels really empowering and it has brought people together."

Dancing to their version of "We Are Family", teachers waved posters reading, "Protect Little Ilford Family".

Kate echoed others when she said, "I am teaching the children of the kids I taught." It is a real community school, with a very stable



ON THE picket line at Little Ilford school, in east London

PICTURE: MIRIAM SCHARF

committed staff, and there is a determination to keep it that way.

Alison, a careers teacher, said, "It has been a long process trying to get management to take concerns seriously. But they haven't listened."

Sean agreed, saying, "I didn't think it would come to this, but we've got to be listened to."

Ladi, like so many a first-time striker, told a rally after the picket line, "This isn't about us, no one goes into education for the money. This is about the

children in this area." Beth, another of the reps' team, was excited about the turnout for the strike. She said, "We have got the backing of the students and this is a good opportunity to raise awareness in the local community who have not had a say."

The local authority had been satisfied with only 12 parents responding to the "consultation".

Parents were not given any information about staff opposition until they received notice of the strike this week.

Some parents have already

voiced support for the staff and workers hope to get many more parents involved in the struggle.

Workers were aware management would try to use divide and rule to weaken them. Kate urged, "Let's not lose this solidarity, this feeling of being together."

NEU members voted by 96 percent for strikes on a 73 percent turnout. After this week the union group has agreed a three-day strike from 24 November.

● Send messages of support to protectlittleilford@gmail.com

SCOTLAND

AUOB debates independence

HUNDREDS OF people joined the largest online gathering yet for the independence movement in Scotland last weekend.

The assembly was organised by the All Under One Banner (AUOB) group that has been organising throughout lockdown.

The event underlined the fact that the Scottish National Party's (SNP) long honeymoon period is definitely over.

Recent figures showed it has lost somewhere in the region of 40,000 members since last year.

This is against a background of soaring support for independence.

This mood to break up the British state has not found a reflection in an effective push for a second independence referendum (indyref2) by the SNP.

At the AUOB gathering the SNP's Westminster leader Ian Blackford floundered in a Q&A session with broadcaster Lesley Riddoch.

She repeatedly pressed him to reveal what many independence campaigners want to know—what's Plan B if the Tories refuse to grant an independence vote.

The tone of comments during this session were dominated by exasperation.

"No answers just more waffle", said Janey. Another participant, Allison, commented, "The people are miles ahead of the politicians."

Saturday's AUOB assembly was a serious discussion, involving representatives from over 200 local Yes groups and pro-independence organisations that have remained active since the first referendum in 2014.

It looked at strategies for winning independence, campaigning during a pandemic and setting up a new national membership organisation.

Hector Sierra and Raymie Kiernan

● Read full article at bit.ly/AUOB1120

ENGINEERING

Rolls-Royce fight escalates

ROLLS-ROYCE workers in Barnoldswick are battling on against bosses' plans to slash 350 jobs at the Lancashire factory.

Unite union members at the aeroplane engine factory announced that they will strike until Christmas Eve.

They began a programme of industrial action on 6 November, originally due to end on 27 November.

Unite regional officer Ross Quinn, said,

"Rolls-Royce is behaving appallingly and should hang its head in shame."

"The striking workers have the full support of their community and will not rest until Rolls-Royce reverses these damaging plans."

Sections of workers at the plant are striking each day.

Every trade unionist should support the fight in Barnoldswick.

● Messages of support to ross.quinn@unitetheunion.org

ROUND-UP

Taking action for justice

REHAB CHARITY workers at We Are With You—formerly Addaction—in Wigan and Leigh have announced another round of walkouts for equal pay.

Unison union members at the drug and alcohol service plan to strike from 25 November to 22 December.

They have been fighting since August 2019 for the same rates of pay as workers employed by the NHS.

The workers were outsourced from the NHS to We Are With You, which runs the service on a contract to the Labour-run council.

● PORTERS AT Heartlands Hospital in Birmingham plan strikes over changes to their shifts.

Unison union members at the hospital held a 48-hour strike on 30 October.

They now plan another

two-day strike from 23 November—and another nine days up until 13 January. New shift patterns are set to hit their pay.

■ WORKERS ON Scotrail are set to strike for six days over bosses' abuse of disciplinary procedures.

The RMT union members, at Glasgow Central station, plan to walk out every Sunday from 29 November until 3 January.

■ WORKERS AT Brighton university have voted for strikes over job cuts.

UCU union members backed strikes by 70 percent and action short of a strike by 90 percent in a consultative ballot.

The turnout was 60 percent. University bosses want to make compulsory redundancies in IT support.

UNISON ELECTION

Turn out for Paul Holmes

MEMBERS OF the Unison union have just over a week left to return their votes in the general secretary election.

Those wanting a fighting union led by members' concerns are busy getting the vote out for socialist Paul Holmes.

Paul, a member of the Labour Party and branch secretary of Kirklees Unison, has led a high-profile campaign to become the first lay member to be general secretary.

His election campaign has energised members of the union desperate to see an end to a leadership that spurns a national fightback.

Union members have until 27 November to return their ballot paper—they should post them off now to win the biggest vote for Paul possible.

● If members haven't had their ballot they should contact the Unison hotline on 0800 857 857 by 12 noon this Fri 20 Nov

OUTSOURCING

Battling the outsourcers

OUTSOURCED security workers in the IWGB union at Greenwich university plan to strike over safety concerns and bonuses. They are employed by Sodexo.

One of the security guards, Kingsley Osadolor, was dismissed from his job for enforcing the rule that students wear a mask.

■ OUTSOURCED cleaning workers at the Ministry of Justice have won full sick pay after action by members of the UVW union.

Emanuel, a cleaner at the ministry, died in April from suspected Covid-19. He could not afford to take time off.

Workers will now receive up to 14 days of sick pay.

The deal is not permanent and the UVW has made it clear that it will fight for sick pay entitlements to be part of the normal contract.

COLLEGES

Forth Valley lecturers start action as wider clash looms

FORTH VALLEY College lecturers in the EIS-Further Education Lecturers' Association (FELA) union began a campaign of industrial action last week.

They are fighting a move which saw 67 lecturers being told their jobs had disappeared.

To retain employment they must apply for an "instructor post".

This means significantly worse pay and conditions, yet the actual teaching expected stays exactly the same.

With up to a third more classes on timetables, virtually no preparation or marking time, it will not only be lecturers, but students who would suffer.

It is important that trade unionists, especially those in education, back Forth Valley, whether they live in Scotland or not.

The management at Forth Valley is threatening to deduct substantial pay when workers take action short of strike.

It is important that lecturers know that they are not alone when they take a stand.

It may be that an all out strike will soon be put forward.

The Scottish employers' association has made it plain it intends to roll out this outrageous programme across the country.

So EIS-FELA is launching a national indicative ballot and there may be wider action in the New Year.

EIS-FELA has fought and won strikes on a number of occasions since 2015.

Donny Gluckstein

● Send messages of support to facebook.com/eisforthvalley/ and Twitter @eisforthvalley

BIDEN'S CABINET BOOSTS BOSSES

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

THE MESSAGE from the early appointments to Joe Biden's new cabinet is that it will be a collection of pro-business warmongers.

This underlines just how little change Biden will bring when he takes over as US president in January.

Ron Klain, who has been Biden's aide since the 1980s, will be the White House chief of staff.

Klain was also aide to Barack Obama and former vice president Al Gore.

He embodies the big business policies that flowed from those administrations.

And he was wheeled out last weekend to say that the Democrats will bring no fundamental change in coronavirus policy.

Lockdown

Klain said there will be no national lockdown including factories and offices. He added that any support for workers' living standards will be based on agreements with the Republicans in Congress.

Others tipped to take

JOE BIDEN is looking to fill his new cabinet with pro-business warmongers

places in the cabinet include Susan Rice for secretary of state and Michele Flournoy as defence secretary.

Both advised Obama on extending US imperialist bloodshed in Libya, Syria,

Afghanistan and elsewhere.

Rice served as the US ambassador to the United Nations (UN) and as US national security officer.

She has previously advocated for tougher sanctions

on Iran, backed Nato interventions in Libya and been a reliable ally to Israel on the UN security council.

Flournoy is another warmonger who was sufficiently right wing enough to

be offered the same job by Donald Trump.

In July Flournoy said that the US is losing its technological advantage over key competitors such as China. She criticised the

Trump administration for not intervening militarily in Iran.

Flournoy also has her corporate interests. She serves on the board of Booz Allen Hamilton—a defence contractor—and is co-founder of Westexec Advisors.

Corporate

This advises corporate clients on where to invest.

Sections of the Democrats are urging Biden to appoint more left wing figures to the cabinet.

The Sunrise Movement, a climate justice group, is pushing Biden to nominate Bernie Sanders and senator Elizabeth Warren.

Sanders confirmed that he was interested in taking up a place, especially as labour secretary.

But there are no signs that Biden will appoint Sanders or Warren to his cabinet.

In any case Sanders will be useful to Biden only as a symbol to rein in any struggle against the administration.

More online

For more on the US, go to www.socialistworker.co.uk

DEMONSTRATION

Pro-Trump protest shows that reactionary politics won't quietly disappear

SEVERAL thousand right wingers gathered in Washington DC last Saturday for the "Million for MAGA march".

It was a clear show that the reactionary politics of Donald Trump won't quietly disappear.

Counter-protesters challenged Trump supporters, chanting, "You lost."

Trump quickly took to Twitter to condemn counter-protesters as "Antifa scum".

He drove by and saluted a section of right wing demonstrators.

Militia groups such

Trump supporters in Washington last Saturday

as the Oath Keepers and the Proud Boys joined the march.

But more mainstream elected officials also offered support for it.

Republican Congress representative Paul Gosar and representative Mike Kelly of Pennsylvania were billed to address the march.

Republican Congress representative Marjorie Taylor Greene, a supporter of the QAnon conspiracist organisation, was one of the speakers.

Many of those who attended back Trump's lie that he won the

election. There were chants of "Four more years" and demands for an audit of the votes.

One protester said, "Trump was winning in a landslide."

"And then in the middle of the night mysteriously all these votes showed up for Joe Biden."

"I don't buy it."

Trump had already denounced it as "rigged" before Biden was confirmed as having won the election.

He then mounted a number of legal challenges, many of which have been overturned or abandoned. A large

number of those who protested in Trump's support also believe that the coronavirus is a "hoax".

A mandate in Washington DC to wear masks was largely ignored.

For a march touted as the "million for MAGA" the actual numbers were relatively small.

But it is a reminder that the fascist forces that Trump has given confidence to won't just go away.

And they can be boosted when Biden disappoints those who voted for him.

A left alternative is crucial.